



Tips For Communities To Help Schools Succeed



Today, more than ever, public schools need the support of their local communities. It used to be easy for public schools to garner all the support they needed, but that climate has changed for several reasons:

- People are busier than ever, and their time has become more valuable.
- More than 70 percent of the state's households don't have school-aged children.
- The diversity of students and families is increasing.
- Parents are more prone to shop for their children's schools.

So, what does community support mean to schools? According to principals of schools with community partners, it means higher staff morale, increased student achievement, higher student attendance rates and positive public opinion.

Parents and schools alone cannot ensure the success of all students. Together, schools and their communities can take advantage of the resources and knowledge of churches, civic organizations, social service agencies and others. Community-based organizations can be the catalysts that bring people together to create committed, long-term partners for schools. These partners can supplement a school's core instructional program with human and financial resources that enhance learning and learning conditions for all students.

Committed partners can also:

- Enrich and broaden academics for students.
- Open students' eyes to unlimited possibilities.
- Challenge students with high expectations.

Here are some ways community groups and individuals can get involved in schools to help students succeed:

Individual Citizens

- Participate in a lunch buddy or pen-pal program with students.
- Provide career counseling to students.
- Volunteer as an academic mentor to help students with their homework or to reinforce lessons learned in the classroom.
- Volunteer to serve on various school-community organizations such as School Improvement Councils, a school or district Strategic Planning Committee, PTA, booster club, etc.
- Encourage intelligent, qualified citizens to run for office as a school board member.
- Help schools apply for grants to foundations and other charitable organizations.
- Volunteer as a school or classroom clerical assistant.



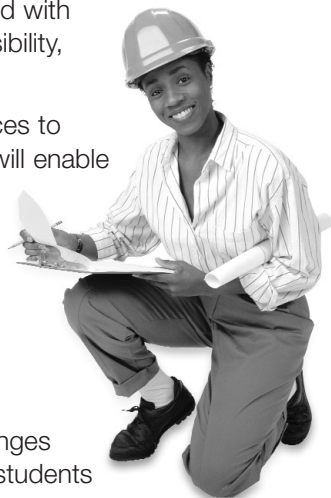
Community Organizations

- Create a scholarship fund for students who exemplify many of the organization's values and goals.
- Organize a career shadowing day by pairing students with community leaders and business professionals.
- Participate in a school beautification activity.
- Sponsor a student recognition program to honor students who are improving their grades, attendance or behavior.
- Sponsor a teacher recognition program at meetings or events.
- Start a Principal for a Day program where members shadow a school principal on a designated day of each year to better understand how schools operate.
- Create a student dictionary project to provide students with their own pocket dictionary. Each dictionary could include a handwritten or printed message from individual members in the organization.
- Partner with a class to conduct a community service project.
- Sponsor a "Cool To Be In School" program to honor students with perfect attendance.
- Sponsor student field trips to academic related events such as regional or state science fairs, leadership conferences, math camps, etc.

Churches

- Sponsor a school supply or clothing drive for students in need.
- Host students during a career shadowing day.

- Recognize student church members who have received special awards or honors from their school.
- Implement an after-school homework center for students.
- Create a bulletin board to showcase student church members who have achieved academic awards. Use clippings from newspapers or school newsletters.
- Work with schools to organize and participate in a character education event to showcase role models who have exhibited character traits such as honesty, respect, perseverance, etc.
- Provide students with book covers printed with simple messages about respect, responsibility, honesty, courage, etc.
- Provide child care or other support services to students with family responsibilities that will enable them to stay in school.



Senior Citizens

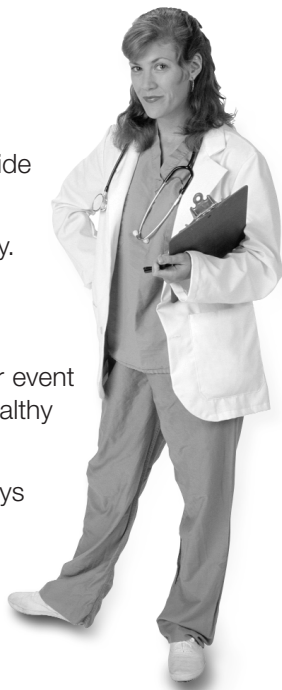
- Serve as a classroom assistant.
- Volunteer as a classroom reader.
- Serve as a school ambassador who arranges and guides school tours for prospective students and parents.
- Volunteer as a classroom speaker to talk about the importance of setting goals.
- Provide students with personal perspectives of historical events.
- Work with the local high school to hold a senior prom that includes senior citizens and high school seniors.

Social/Services Agencies

- Help establish a community task force to ensure all children's social and mental health needs are being served.
- Host students during a career shadowing day.
- Create a directory of community resources that are available to help families and provide copies to students and their parents.
- Consider cooperative activities to better meet the needs of children and their families, such as scheduling county health department personnel's regular visits in school health rooms or scheduling meetings of social services workers, school counselors and other interested parties to discuss a student's needs.

Healthcare Providers

- Establish a health services task force to provide students in need with healthcare services.
- Host students during a career shadowing day.
- Volunteer to serve on a school emergency preparedness committee.
- Work with the school to organize a health fair event to educate students on the importance of healthy lifestyles.
- Provide literature about local schools or essays written by students as reading materials for clients in office waiting rooms.



Public Safety

- Host students during a career shadowing day.
- Volunteer to serve on a school emergency preparedness committee.
- Organize and participate in a school safety event to educate students about the importance of school rules and their responsibility to maintain safe and orderly schools.

Media

- Host students during a career shadowing day.
- Volunteer to narrate and/or produce marketing videos for schools.
- Speak to the school publication staff about writing, editing and covering news events.
- Serve as an emcee at student or teacher recognition events.
- Work with students to write, produce and star in a weekly or monthly school news broadcast.
- Work with schools to create a monthly school news section of the community/local newspaper.
- Encourage teachers to use the local newspaper as a teaching tool in the classroom.
- Work with public television stations to create special training videos for school employees.
- Feature student produced artwork or articles in publications.

Others

- Work with local public libraries to implement a weekend or summer student incentive reading program that encourages students to visit and read books from the local library.
- Work with recreation departments or community centers to offer children late-afternoon enrichment activities such as drama, public speaking, martial arts, dancing, leadership training and job development.
- Adopt a cooperative agreement between schools and community for shared use of sports and recreation facilities.
- Partner with local art museum stores and/or community facilities to exhibit student artwork or projects.
- Work with local art and historical associations to provide interdisciplinary research opportunities for teachers and students.
- Partner with local professors of education to share research findings concerning student-centered learning and resource-based teaching techniques through workshops, institutes and continuing education programs.
- Organize a group of community leaders, other than educators, who can speak on behalf of schools at community events or meetings.

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